

DEBRIEFING OF SENATOR ELLENDER

On 25X1A6d  
On 10 January 1957, from 0845 to 1145 hours, Senator Ellender was debriefed in [redacted] building at a meeting attended by 15 representatives of CIA, State Department and the Armed Services.

Senator Ellender made the following observations on his recent trip to Russia, the Middle East and Far East:

A. Russia

At the outset of the meeting he emphasized that his primary interest during his tour of Russia was farming, food, livestock and agricultural methods. During his 1955 trip to Russia, he stated that Mikoyan had assured him he could visit any part of Russia he desired. When he indicated his intention to return to Russia in 1956, he received a call from Ambassador Zarubin telling him to contact the Russian New York Bureau to plan his itinerary. Ellender replied he would make the trip only on two conditions: (1) that he plan his own itinerary, and (2) that he use his own interpreter, Mr. Horace Davis, currently serving as agricultural attaché at the US Embassy in Moscow.\*

Conclusions

The US has made a "miserable failure" of giving Russia a really accurate and objective picture of the West's way of life. The impression is received in talking with Russians of all levels from Politburo to cooperatives that Americans don't seem to give to anyone in Russia a sincere presentation of the advantages of the American system. Our fatal error is continuously harping on the evils of Communism without acknowledging that whatever improvements in living standards are now enjoyed by Russians, as compared with conditions existing under the Czars, derive from Communism and Communist leadership. On this point Russians should be given the benefit of the doubt.

The net effect of ideological castigation has been to turn the propaganda offensive over to the Russians by default, because the US hasn't succeeded in showing the Russians by plain straight facts that there is a better way than Communism. Russians for the most part throughout the country are entirely ignorant of conditions in the US and are eager to learn and know about the American way of life. Russian leaders respect and admire American ingenuity, progress and material accomplishments, and more than anything, want to have what the US has achieved.

He feels the US should have a "new look" at Russia. He, for one, would be willing to forget, for the time being, Russia's past actions, and attempt a new approach to see if a degree of understanding could be achieved on current international issues now dividing the two powers. If the US continues to enact policies and support positions which can be used as propaganda against us, this will only delay attempts to achieve understanding through a new approach.

He believes it impossible for another Stalin to rise again, because the conditions of extreme poverty and ignorance which facilitated Stalin's rise have now been ameliorated. He thinks the biggest mistake the Russian leaders made was to educate the Russian people. Even though indoctrinated with Communist ideology, recent evidence indicates the Russian is beginning to do some thinking for himself and wants an opportunity to develop himself. The youth of Russia, particularly, as a result of education, are beginning to question the policies and actions of the leadership. In addition, the Hungarian atrocities have had an immeasurable impact on this process. He thinks that the Russian leadership won't be able, in the long run, to suppress the ferment now developing among Russian students.

He believes the current situation within Russia offers to the US a "golden opportunity" to demonstrate that there is a better way of life because the people in Russia are now in a position to be receptive to US efforts to raise doubts and question the wisdom of Soviet policies and leadership. He strongly urged immediate action to greatly increase the program for exchange-of-persons (without, however, lowering present security requirements and controls) for two reasons:

1. By permitting Russians to see for themselves what conditions are like in the US and what a system superior to Communism can produce, to thereby create an urge to compare standards and foster dissatisfaction with what Russians have at home which will exert pressures on the leadership for change. The time is now opportune and nothing should be left undone to increase exchanges and develop dissatisfaction with conditions in the homeland.
2. Khrushchev is now advocating increased exchanges and he'll close out on us if we don't reciprocate, and will then blame the US for unwillingness to develop friendly relations in the exchange field.

Wherever he went in Russia, he heard nothing but praise for those US-Russian exchange visits made to date, particularly the farmers' exchange and their treatment while in the US. He is convinced the exchange program offers the only real opportunity to get at the Russian people directly by letting them see for themselves the facts of what a better way of life has to offer.

He believes the real reason why Khrushchev and leadership object to President Eisenhower's inspection plan is because the Russians don't have what the US thinks they have and the Russians are afraid to have the US call their bluff by showing what they've actually got and revealing what's going on inside the country.

In addition to his suggestion for increased exchanges, he also recommended continuation of such activity as the exchange publication Amerika as well as more effective USIS programs behind the Iron Curtain.\*

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\* He explicitly stated that he approves and supports USIS activity only behind the Iron Curtain, not in Western Europe.

B. Middle East

In his opinion, the Arab-Israeli area, not Russia, is the "hottest spot on earth" for US foreign policy because it is the spot most vulnerable to Russian manipulation. He talked with the President of Syria, the Prime Minister of Israel, King Ibn Saud, King Hussein and Arab leaders in North Africa. From these discussions, he believes no permanent settlement in the area can be achieved until the basic Arab-Israeli problems are resolved. He neither approves of nor supports President Eisenhower's \$400 million plan for the MidEast because he feels it will never achieve a permanent settlement—it only appeases both sides without compelling them to settle their differences first—nor does the plan begin to resolve the Arab refugee problem which he considers a disgrace to the US and the rest of the world. In opposing \$400 million for "appeasement" he stated that the US can no longer afford to pick up the bills left behind by France and Britain all over the world.

In his opinion there was no more chance of getting an agreement between the Arabs and Jews than in trying to mix oil and water, because the Arabs will never accept a de facto Jewish State or discuss principal issues directly with Jewish representatives except through an intermediary—nor will the Jews abandon their State or give up an inch of what they've won, in addition to wanting access through Suez for shipping as well as oil supplies.

His suggested approach to finding a solution is based on the following reasons: He believes there is no chance whatsoever of making Israel a self-sustaining state without subsidization. Israel has a minimum plan of resettling two and one-half million Jews. From his observations while in Israel, he doesn't believe that Israel can care adequately for the 1,650,000 Jewish refugees it now has. In addition, Israel is highly vulnerable in any hot war—one conventional bomb strategically dropped could completely disrupt Israel's present irrigation system upon which its agricultural economy depends.

Since Israel cannot be self-sustaining nor can she accommodate a goal of resettling two and one-half million Jewish refugees, he would attempt to effect a compromise by having the State of Israel accorded symbolic but not de facto recognition status by the Arabs, and by working out a resettlement program to pioneer other areas for Jews in Africa. If, after reasonable efforts were made and the Arabs and Jews remain unwilling to compromise their differences along these or similar suggested lines, he believes that ultimately it will mean a political decision of choosing between the free State of Israel with a population of 1,650,000, or alienating the entire Arab world of 80-90 million, which, he feels, the US cannot afford to do. Failing settlement, he would recommend cutting off aid to both sides as a last resort.

He feels that the present situation in the Middle East cannot and must not be permitted to continue or develop to the point where the Arabs, within a highly irrational and emotionally-charged context, ask the Russians to come in and help them eliminate the State of Israel, which he considers a serious possibility. He believes US policy should insist upon the resolution and removal of basic differences to prevent Russia from coming in at all costs.

At the end of the meeting, Senator Ellender placed at the disposition of the Agency and other interested government representatives his films and personal notes taken during his tour.